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Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Note by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

I have the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council a report prepared by the Committee on World Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on the progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, highlighting its linkages with the coordinated and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits undertaken by the United Nations system.

* E/2007/100 and Corr.1

** The late submission of the present document is due to the fact that the Committee on World Food Security concluded its work on 10 May 2007.

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Implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action: report of the Committee on World Food Security through the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to the Economic and Social Council

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1999/212, the Economic and Social Council invited the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to transmit to the Council every four years, starting in 1999, a report prepared by the Committee on World Food Security on progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, highlighting its linkages with the coordinated and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits undertaken by the United Nations system.

2. At its one hundred and twenty-fourth session (Rome, 23-28 June 2003), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Council considered and approved a report of the Committee on World Food Security through the FAO Council to the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action (CL 124/LIM/2). The report consisted, inter alia, of the Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later and the recommendations of the Committee with regard to two sets of reviews carried out in 2000 and 2002.

3. The present quadrennial report consists of the recommendations of the Committee with regard to two sets of reviews carried out in 2004 and 2006, as reflected in the associated reports of the Committee and the Council. The highlight of the thirtieth session of the Committee in 2004 was the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.[1] As foreseen in objective 7.3 of the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit (1996), a special forum was held within the thirty-second session of the Committee on World Food Security in 2006 to undertake a major broad-based progress assessment of the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and a midterm review of progress made in achieving the target of reducing by half the number of undernourished people no later than 2015. The special forum involved active participation from Governments, relevant international organizations and civil society actors.[2]

II. Extracts from the report of the Committee on World Food Security on its thirtieth session

(CL 127/10, paras. 11-17; 23-26)

4. The Committee reviewed the report on the progress made in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action (see CFS:2004/3). It noted that the report was based on information received from 33 countries, the

[1] For the report of the Chair and the text of the Voluntary Guidelines see ftp://ftp.fao.org/unfao/bodies/council/cl27/J3345e1.pdf.

[2] See CL 131/6, appendix E (ftp://ftp.fao.org/unfao/bodies/council/cl31/j8689e.doc), for a Chairperson's summary of the outcome of the special forum.

European Union representing its 25 member States, three United Nations agencies and two international organizations, using the revised reporting format approved and recommended by the FAO Council at its one hundred and twenty-fifth session. The Committee underscored the need to improve the reporting rate to make the synthesis report more representative of all countries.

5. The Committee reiterated its concern that the progress made in reducing the number of undernourished people remained very slow at the global level. It recognized that the ongoing efforts to fight hunger were important, but insufficient. It also called for an adequate response to the challenges of poverty and hunger reduction and display of strong political will to ensure the achievement of the goals of the World Food Summit and the Millennium Declaration.

6. The Committee was informed by the delegation of Brazil that representatives from several countries, including Heads of State and Government, and from international organizations were meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 20 September 2004, at the invitation of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, for a summit of world leaders for "Action against hunger and poverty". The Committee was also informed by the Brazilian Ambassador that the purpose of the meeting was to mobilize international attention and political will to meet the challenges of combating hunger and poverty and to search for innovative financing mechanisms for development.

7. The Committee expressed concern that the performance of countries in tackling poverty and hunger and their progress towards internationally agreed targets was uneven. It noted with satisfaction that most countries with sound policies and well-developed institutional and physical infrastructure have succeeded in attaining economic growth and reducing poverty and food insecurity. The Committee regretted that there had been no progress towards the goals in some countries, and that in others poverty and hunger were even on the rise. In that context, the Committee re-emphasized the overriding importance of an enabling political, social, economic and sustainable natural resources environment conducive to economic growth and poverty reduction.

8. The Committee stressed that the success in improving food security is contingent upon improved economic conditions in general and agricultural growth in particular, and agreed that to be successful the fight against hunger needs to follow a broad-based approach, involving all stakeholders. In this connection, the Committee stressed the importance of a holistic approach in implementing the seven commitments in the World Food Summit Plan of Action. The Committee stressed that the primary responsibility for the fight against hunger rests with national Governments. The Committee pointed out that good governance and a conducive policy environment at the national level are essential for accelerated development and reduction of poverty and hunger. It also noted that progress in those areas should be supported by a conducive international environment. The need to enhance official development assistance (ODA), reduce export subsidies, trade-distorting domestic support to agriculture and the debt burden of developing countries were also underscored. The Committee underlined the importance of food aid, particularly in emergency situations, but stressed that hunger cannot be sustainably eradicated by food aid alone. The Committee also emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation at subregional and regional levels in the struggle against

hunger. The Committee stressed the need for renewed attention to strengthen South-South cooperation.

9. Noting that the Heads of State and Government at the World Food Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development had identified rural development as essential to sustainable development and poverty eradication, several delegates stressed that all the underlying causes of rural poverty, hunger and environmental degradation could not be addressed through the use of sustainable agricultural practices alone. They expressed concern that food security and rural development issues were not adequately reflected in poverty reduction strategy papers of many countries and that there was a lack of interface between policies and programmes for agriculture and those for water management and biodiversity. In that connection, the Committee emphasized that monitoring should not only focus on the progress made in reducing hunger but also on the impact of policies and of a wide range of development efforts in the form of projects and programmes at the country level.

10. The Committee made the following recommendations:

For follow-up by FAO

- Undertake analytical studies of countries that have succeeded in reducing poverty and food insecurity so that lessons could be drawn for the benefit of other countries;
- Assist developing countries in building their capacity to benefit from the opportunities provided by a liberalized trading environment;
- Increase its efforts to carry out liaison with other United Nations organizations and international financial institutions in order to better address the complex issue of food insecurity, including education, health and other related social aspects.

For follow-up by countries

- Provide, in future reports on the follow-up on the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, information on the impact of policy and specific projects and programmes on poverty reduction and food security;
- Strengthen national agriculture, rural development and food security policies and strategies and accord high priority in budget allocation to rural and agricultural development with the view to fostering economic growth and development and reducing poverty and food insecurity.

For the follow-up by donors and international organizations

- Give preference, where appropriate, to the purchase of local and regional produce in the provision of food aid to developing countries for emergency assistance and development programmes.

III. Extract from the reports on the third and fourth sessions of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security

11. The Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food security in the context of national food security, Mr. Mohammad Saeid Noori-Naeeni (Islamic Republic of Iran), introduced the reports of the third and fourth sessions of the Working Group held at FAO headquarters from 5 to 10 July 2004 (CFS 2004/6) and on 23 September 2004 (IGWG RTFG 5/1). He recalled that the Working Group had been established by the FAO Council as a subsidiary body of the Committee on World Food Security at the Council's one hundred and twenty-third session and that the Council had mandated the Working Group to finish its work within a period of two years.

12. The Chair summarized the conduct and process of negotiations of the voluntary guidelines and presented the draft text of the voluntary guidelines as adopted by the Working Group.

13. The Committee on World Food Security commended the work of the Chair, the bureau of the Working Group and the members on their constructive negotiations. The Committee took particular note of the important role that other stakeholders had been able to play in the development of the guidelines. The Committee also expressed its appreciation for the work of the secretariat.

14. The Committee on World Food Security endorsed the voluntary guidelines as submitted and decided to transmit them to Council for final adoption.

IV. Extract from the report of the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Working Group for the elaboration of a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food security in the context of national food security on its third session

(CL 131/6, paras. 7-9)

Special forum

15. The special forum was conducted as a multi-stakeholder dialogue according to commitment seven of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the further guidance provided at the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Committee on World Food Security.

16. The multi-stakeholder dialogue involved the members of the Committee and representatives of over 100 civil society organizations, including organizations of farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, alliances against hunger, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, youth and women worldwide, and representatives of intergovernmental organizations.

17. The Chairperson's summary was neither negotiated nor agreed upon by the participants in the special forum, and is therefore not binding on the Committee, its members, civil society or other organizations that participated in it.

V. Extract from the report of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on its one hundred and twenty-seventh session

(CL 127/REP, paras. 17-26)

18. The Council endorsed the report of the Committee on World Food Security on its thirtieth session and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein. With regard to the goal set out in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security adopted at the World Food Summit of reducing the number of undernourished to half of the 1996 level by no later than 2015, the Committee expressed its concern at the very slow progress at the global level. It stressed, in particular, that the situation in sub-Saharan African countries was disturbing. The Council noted that efforts to fight hunger remained insufficient. In that connection, the Council recalled that rural development was essential for sustainable development and for poverty and hunger eradication, and called on countries to accord higher priority to food security through agriculture and rural development in national strategies and budgets. Several members informed the Council of the actions taken by their Governments to overcome poverty and hunger.

19. The Council stressed that the primary responsibility for the fight against poverty and hunger rested with national Governments. It agreed on the overriding importance of strong political will and an enabling political, social, economic and sustainable natural resources environment conducive to economic growth and poverty reduction. The Council emphasized that efforts at national level should be supported by a conducive international environment and agreed on the need to enhance the allocation of resources, including ODA, to agricultural and rural development. Many members stressed the importance of alleviating the debt burden of developing countries. The Council underlined the importance of food aid, particularly in emergency situations, but stressed that hunger could not be sustainably eradicated by food aid alone.

20. The Council referred to the impact of the locust plague in West and North Africa, to the recent emergencies caused by a series of hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean and to their effects on national food security and the worsening of poverty and hunger among the poor. Several members affected by the locust crisis expressed their gratitude to FAO and donor countries for the support provided and appealed for additional assistance to supplement major efforts already under way. The Council recommended that donor countries, FAO and the United Nations agencies concerned accelerate coordinated and urgent assistance to the affected countries to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

21. The Council recognized, with satisfaction, that the Committee had welcomed the package of framework agreements of the World Trade Organization of July 2004 and supported the Committee's view that serious work was needed to provide substance to the consensus reached. It also supported the Committee's recommendation that trade analysis continue to be part of the assessment of the

world food security situation, and that FAO assist developing countries in building their capacity to benefit from the opportunities provided by a liberalized trading environment.

22. The Council supported the decision of the Committee to hold a special forum in 2006 to review progress made in the achievement of the objectives of the World Food Summit, consonant with the recommendations contained in objective 7.3, specifically 7.3 (g) and 7.3 (h). The Council agreed that at the thirty-first session of the Committee in 2005, a multi-stakeholder dialogue would take place, funded from within available resources, between Governments, international organizations and representatives of civil society.

23. The Council noted that, based on its recommendation at its one hundred and twenty-fifth session, the Committee on World Food Security had considered the revised reporting format for monitoring of the implementation of the follow-up to the World Food Summit. The Council agreed that the secretariat should convene a regionally balanced Working Group of Experts to review and finalize a revised reporting format and a related set of indicators.

VI. Intergovernmental Working Group for the Elaboration of a Set of Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (September 2004)

24. The Council recalled that, in accordance with the request of the World Food Summit five years later, the Council, at its one hundred and twenty-third session, had established an Intergovernmental Working Group to elaborate a set of voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. On 23 September 2004, at its fourth session, the Intergovernmental Working Group had adopted the draft text of the voluntary guidelines and had submitted it to the thirtieth session of the Committee on World Food Security (Rome, 20-23 September 2004). At that session, the Committee had endorsed the guidelines and had submitted them to the Council for final adoption.

25. The Council expressed its gratitude to the Chair of the Intergovernmental Working Group, its members and observers, and to the secretariat for the successful conclusion of the negotiations, which had been conducted in a transparent and participatory manner.

26. The Council adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. The Council recommended that members implement the Guidelines, decided to bring the Guidelines to the attention of the next session of the Conference and requested the Director-General to ensure their wide dissemination to all relevant United Nations bodies and agencies.

27. Many members also requested the secretariat to ensure, through mainstreaming and inclusion in the next programme of work and budget proposal, adequate follow-up action on the Voluntary Guidelines, including the preparation of information, communications and training materials, and to strengthen its capacity to assist members in implementing them. Many members also requested the secretariat to

seek additional extrabudgetary resources to further mainstream the Voluntary Guidelines.

VII. Extract from the report of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on its one hundred and thirty-first session

(CL 131/REP, paras. 15-21)

28. The Council unanimously endorsed the report of the thirty-second session of the Committee on World Food Security. It commended the secretariat for the organization and conduct of the special forum, which had generated many interesting views on the hunger and poverty situation in the world and raised its concerns regarding the lack of progress towards the goal of the World Food Summit. While some members requested institutionalization of the special forum, others indicated they did not support such a proposal. Many members requested that options for continued engagement of multi-stakeholders in future years be discussed at the next session of the Committee.

29. The Council noted with satisfaction the steady progress with regard to the International Alliance Against Hunger and welcomed proposals for it to become increasingly self-financing in the future through mobilization of new resources, recognizing that FAO still had a significant catalytic role to play and that efforts should be undertaken to strengthen the dialogue and networking with other existing platforms at regional and global levels.

30. The Council recognized the initiative "Latin America and Caribbean without Hunger 2025" as an effort to promote the achievement of the objectives of the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goals.

31. The Council noted that emerging issues that were at present intensively discussed internationally, including biofuels, agricultural biodiversity, climate change and the use of the term "global public goods", had been raised in the discussions of the Committee on World Food Security.

32. The Council also noted that several countries were calling for rapid implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, but stressed the voluntary nature of the guidelines.

33. While many members requested the secretariat to mainstream the Voluntary Guidelines in its work programme, others opposed it.

34. Many members invited FAO to increase its efforts to coordinate and cooperate with other United Nations organizations, in particular with its sister organizations in Rome.